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World Domination 2001

by Douglas "Rabbi Small" Kaufman
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It's that time of year again, when a young man's fancy turns to other exciting things. He probably doesn't give **Netrunner**® a second thought when he's busy thinking about springtime—but maybe a little later, as spring becomes summer, he might start thinking about Gridlock Weekend and World Domination.

We've just begun the Gridlock process, and several key people are on board, willing to host tournaments and help out in some way.

What this means is that there *will* be a Gridlock weekend, and a World Domination **Netrunner** Championship this year. The only issues are how vast it will be, and what form it will take.

Lukas Kautzsch has reminded us that the format has been put down in writing once before; if you have internet access, you can read all about it at

http://www.oberfoul.de/nr/wd99.htm

Most of this information is specific to WD '99, but the essentials of the format are sound. We'll be choosing a three-person committee to organize the event. There will be a specific timeframe for qualifiers, round 1, and finals.

Official TRC/DCI tournament rules will be followed. The exact format is still to be determined, but will most likely be Sealed in qualifier and round 1 events, and Limited Constructed in the finals.

Various players from previous WD events, and various regionals and nationals are prequalified for WD round 1.

More information will be forthcoming, so don't unsubscribe from the Netrunner-l yet!

Doug Kaufman, TRC Chair

State of the Corp—June 2001

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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Systematic Layoffs continue at Wizards, and sadly, I am one of the victims. Thus, my exceedingly limited ability to assist **Netrunner**® players with prize support, etc., will become nonexistent. My last day is July 13. I'm going to catch up on some stuff I've been owing people for a while, and I still have cool prizes for World Domination. I still plan to run a Northwest qualifier event, but without the questionable cachet of being a corporate drone. So, no more "State of the Corp" columns.

At this point, Zvi Mowshowitz is the biggest champion for **Netrunner** there is. I've been withdrawing from visibility, at least partially on purpose, given that my corporate clout has become nil and since private ownership of the game is a real possibility. I still plan to be a field supporter, though.

— "Jen of Arc"

This is a hard blow indeed for everybody involved. Jennifer, the TRC wishes you all the best luck for the future and thanks you a thousand times for all the support you have given **Netrunner**. *We sincerely hope that you continue to enjoy the game, and that we'll see you around in Netspace as often as possible.*

(Ed.)

THE DIOSCURI (PART THREE)

World Wide Widgets – DIOSCURI—Corp

Once during each run when you could normally use special effects, you may make a trace[4]. For purposes of this trace (only), the Runner is considered to have a base link of 2 and a link increase value of 2:2. No other base link may be used during this trace. If the trace is successful, give the Runner a tag OR do 1 meat damage. This damage cannot be prevented.

Starting Hand: 3
Starting Bits: 3

"There's one in every household, and no one knows what they do—until they try an illegal data run!"

The Will and the Way – DIOSCURI—Runner

Once per turn, you may take an action and spend 2* to add one keyword from the following list to any revealed Corp card. This change stays in effect until the beginning of your next turn.
Ice only: AP, Black Ice, Pit Bull, Bloodhound, Brainwipe, DecKrash, Deflector, Firestarter, Flatline, Hellbolt, Hellhound, Knockout, Random, Sleepy, Stun, Sword, Watchdog, Zombie.
Non-ice: Advertisement, AI, Ambush, Asset, Black Ops, Gray Ops, Research, Transaction, Virus.

Ashema: "Simply use your will to bend the spoon."
Weef: "Honored Ashema, the secret is that there is no spoon."
Ashema: "That's what you think, grasshopper."

"Elementary, My Dear Wilson!"
Famous Netrunner Stacks
#10: Masochism Rules

by Jens Kreutzer
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with input by Derek Evans

"The sacrifices one must sometimes make for the common good!
"—and, one might add, a few thousand eurobucks ... ."
Stephen Holodinsky

The biggest impact of the release of the *Proteus*™ expansion in September 1996 was arguably the introduction of Bad Publicity as a game mechanic: Virtually overnight, there was a new avenue of winning for the Runner that did not depend on agenda points. While many Bad Publicity (BP) cards require interaction with the Corp (among the most powerful ones are Scaldan and Identity Donor), there are also some that don't. More on those below.

At first glance, giving the Corporation 7 BP points looks the same as scoring 7 agenda points. After all, it's still the number 7, and (in the case of BP, most of the time) the Runner has to run to get to 7 points and victory. However, in a tournament, a BP strategy has a slight disadvantage in comparison to the standard agenda-liberating approach: Most tournament scoring systems take into account the number of matches a player has won, and sometimes even the total number of scored agenda points is of importance. If a Runner goes for BP instead of agenda points and loses a game, it doesn't matter whether he or she has given the Corp 0 or 6 BP—0 agenda points is entered on the scoresheet in both cases, which means that the entire match will almost certainly be lost as well. Some players have argued for altering the status quo, suggesting that BP points should be counted as "victory points" in the same way as agenda points.

This disadvantage, next to many BP cards' depending on certain Corp cards like black ice, is the main reason that an "interactive" BP approach (apart from Scaldan and perhaps Frame-Up) is deemed unfeasible by most players and therefore not used in Constructed tournaments. However, two BP cards do not require any interaction with the Corp: Faked Hit and Poisoned Water Supply. Each comes with a price (brain damage and having to trash certain resources, respectively), but they avoid Corp interference almost entirely. Thus, they lend themselves to becoming the core of a well-oiled, no-run BP engine that pays this price in the fastest and most effective way.

A deck that uses Poisoned Water Supply to best effect is one of the most powerful and dreaded Runner stacks at the time, but this article focuses on its predecessor, the Faked Hit strategy. Its most famous incarnation is the "Masochism Rules" stack by Stephen Holodinsky, with which he completely surprised his opponents at a tournament in Berlin, shortly after the *Proteus* release, and finished in first place. Although players like Steve Bauer, Len Blado, William C. Brandt, Stephane Bura, Stephen Lake, Eric Rodriguez and Chris Wagner (a.k.a. Foolkiller) pointed out the potential of Faked Hit right away on the Netrunner-l mailing list, no-interaction BP decks had not yet been canonized as a deck archetype by the time of the Berlin tournament, and when Stephen installed neither icebreakers nor anything else that would help with accessing cards, his opponents at first believed themselves completely safe. Since then, however, players have learned to be wary whenever Top Runners' Conference shows up in numbers.

The decklist shown below was originally published as a "deck of the week" on Matthias Nagy's "The Netrunner Weekly" website
(www.darkpact.de/decks/runner007.html),
and this article is largely based on Stephen's own comments that came with the list.

9	**Faked Hit**
9	**Top Runners' Conference**
9	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
6	**Militech MRAM Chip**
3	**Preying Mantis**
2	**Junkyard BBS**
2	**MIT West Tier**
3	**Total Genetic Retrofit**
2	**Nasuko Cycle**

Perhaps the most characteristic attribute of Masochism Rules is that it, as a no-run stack, does not include any programs. Of the nine Faked Hits, the Runner intends to play seven to give the Corp 7 BP points and win. Ideally, this is done in one quick stroke, over just one turn (or at most two), to keep the Corp in the dark about the Runner's intentions until it is too late. Three Preying Mantises make a seven-actions turn possible.

Since playing Faked Hit means suffering 2 points of unpreventable brain damage, and activating Preying Mantis' ability also results in unpreventable brain damage at the end of the turn, this deck is built to withstand cruel amounts of brain damage. It has six Militech MRAM Chips and should install at least five of them, for a whopping total hand size of 20 (or ideally, all six for hand size 23). Even reduced by the 12 brain damage points dealt by seven Faked Hits, the resulting hand size of 8 is still enough for a couple of Preying Mantis shots with room to spare. However, seven Faked Hits plus the twelve cards that are discarded due to brain damage means losing 19 cards in all, and these must all be in the Runner's hand at the start of the final turn. Note that the seventh Faked Hit doesn't do any damage to the Runner, because the Corp immediately loses on the 7th BP point, ending the game before the final 2 brain damage is dealt.

Nine Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood (BSB) constitute the workhorse that shovels the whole stack into the Runner's hand as quickly as possible. Conveniently, never making a run totally negates the weakness of Top Runners' Conference, so it is the ideal bit engine for this stack.

When playing Masochism Rules, keep the following in mind: If at all possible, make sure no cards get discarded due to hand size restrictions, because they are ultimately needed to fill out the fully set-up, 20- or 23-card hand. Therefore, carefully consider when to play a BSB—when in doubt, drawing single cards might be preferable, for in the end, it's cheaper to lose a couple of actions here than pick up filler material with Junkyard BBS if the stack is exhausted. When a discard cannot be avoided, make sure never to dump a Faked Hit, since this would give away everything. At the start of the game, installing Top Runners' Conferences for bits and MRAM Chips for hand size is the first priority in order to get the BSB draw engine running smoothly.

Another serious consideration is tag protection, but since almost all of the Corp's tagging cards rely on some sort of interaction—which Masochism Rules won't provide—, threats like Manhunt or Schlaghund Pointers can't touch the Runner. That leaves Underworld Mole, City Surveillance, and "unconditional" tracers/taggers like Blood Cat. All of these can be a nuisance, but with Nasuko Cycle, Total Genetic Retrofit and a hand size that laughs in the face of Schlaghund, this stack should be able to survive a Tag 'n' Bag Corp opponent. After all, bits are plentiful after the first two or three turns, and using Nasuko Cycle—or simply paying off a City Surveillance—should keep the Runner tag-free. A Preying Mantis or Junkyard lost to Underworld Mole would probably hurt the most, so a careful Runner should make a point of installing Nasuko Cycle early on.

While the Cycle can be omitted to save time if the Corp obviously doesn't play dedicated Tag 'n' Bag (in the case of a Rent-to-Own deck, for example), one Junkyard BBS is an indispensable part of the setup. As soon as this Junkyard, all Militech MRAM Chips and Preying Mantises are installed, the Runner can draw the whole stack, and preparations for the final phase are complete. Playing eight BSB, six Top Runners' Conferences, six MRAM Chips, three Preying Mantises, one Junkyard (and probably one Cycle) takes 24 or 25 actions. Not playing the Cycle can theoretically save a whole turn, setting the minimum setup time to six turns. Most of the time, however, everything does not work out perfectly, and it is typical to be ready only at the end of turn eight. On the plus side, having 35 bits in the pool by that time is usually not much of a problem (barring Corp nastiness like City Surveillance).

In the next turn (typically turn nine), the first four actions are used for playing Faked Hits, while hoping not to lose any of the remaining Faked Hits to brain damage. If there are still any Faked Hits left in the Runner's hand after this, Preying Mantis actions are used *one at a time* for playing them. In a really lucky scenario, no more than two of the nine Faked Hits are lost, letting the Runner play seven in a row and win. But don't count on it: Most of the time, one or two too many will be lost in the carnage. When the last available Hit has been played, it's usually best to end the turn—additional Mantis actions to play MIT West Tier, for example, won't do much good in most cases, since the accumulated Mantis damage might nick a freshly-drawn Faked Hit again. It's better to wait for the next turn, which will very probably be the last. Junkyard BBS has a very good chance of letting the Runner dig up and play the remainder of the seven Faked Hits within the seven available actions. If an MIT is handy, and a Faked Hit is not the top card of the trash, playing the MIT is preferable: With nearly all non-prep cards gone from the stack, the chances of drawing enough Faked Hits (or BSB to get at them quickly) are pretty high. Then, typically by turn ten, the Corp will be finished—if it hasn't won in the meantime.

Stephen described how a perfect starting hand for Masochism Rules might look: "Bodyweight Synthetic Blood, Militech MRAM Chip, two Top Runners Conference, Nasuko Cycle. First action BSB, then MMC followed by both TRCs. Install the Cycle on the first action of your next turn."

An interesting historic sidenote is what the discussion on the Netrunner-l came up with around September 3, 1996, which was the official release date of the *Proteus* expansion. Actually, some players had astounding insights even *before* the actual release, having read the spoiler. Ideas revolved around using Loan from Chiba as a bit engine, as well as repeated self-inflicted flatlines with Faked Hit, followed by Arasaka Owns You. Though all the players mentioned above realized the potential of Faked Hit as the basis for a no-run strategy, nobody thought of using Top Runners' Conference as a bit engine at first.

Since then, *Classic*™ hasn't really done much in terms of influencing the Faked Hit strategy. With regard to Masochism Rules, one could substitute Vintage Camaro for Nasuko Cycle, but with this deck, bits are plentiful while time is of the essence, so that the Cycle is still the better choice. However, back in October 1998, a variant of the Faked Hit approach was designed by Sean Eric Ponce, which he called The Big Hurt (50 cards):

10	**Faked Hit**
17	**Score!**
10	**Bodyweight™ Synthetic Blood**
10	**Militech MRAM Chip**
3	**Junkyard BBS**

The point of this stack is that no rare cards are needed to build it, which makes it attractive for players who don't have a big card collection (though amassing ten BSB or Faked Hits may be a quest in itself). Instead of Top Runners' Conference, Sean Eric uses Score! as a bit engine, which does the job almost as well. Tag protection is dispensed with altogether, an extremely risky move that admittedly speeds up things. The additional card slots are filled with extra copies of Faked Hit, BSB and Militech MRAM Chips. These are very much needed, since without Preying Mantis, this deck doesn't attempt Masochism Rules' plan of playing all Faked Hits in one turn. Here, the endgame invariably takes at the very least two turns (but usually three to five), with heavy use of Junkyard BBS. If bits run low, Junkyard can also recycle a couple of Score! preps, though Runners should be aware of the fact that this nets only 1.5 bits per action in effect.

When one compares Stephen's rare-heavy stack with Big Hurt, the former is probably the more elegant version. More important than aesthetic considerations, however, is the question of speed. Big Hurt has 50 cards instead of 45 but makes up for it by not having to draw the whole stack, unlike Masochism Rules.

Moreover, it neither has to deal with Preying Mantis brain damage, nor does it have to hold 19 cards at a time for a one-turn win. This reduces the need for hand size a little bit, and also makes Hurt much more flexible when timing the start of the endgame. Further, not playing Nasuko Cycle and Preying Mantis saves actions.

Generally speaking, Big Hurt can start the endgame even earlier than Masochism Rules, though it invariably takes longer to execute it: Hand size 17 or 20, together with 45 or possibly as few as 40 bits, plus seven Faked Hits (or maybe six in a pinch) are enough for Big Hurt to start hitting. Masochism Rules typically finishes in an average of ten turns, while Big Hurt usually pulls it off in eleven—though it sometimes takes considerably longer, especially if not enough BSB are drawn.

Therefore, quite surprisingly, Stephen's 17 rare cards net only a single turn in terms of speed; Sean Eric's stack is very much an accomplishment in this respect. But in competition, the points described above make all the difference (especially if the Corp is to

be taken by surprise)—and so, less surprisingly, Masochism Rules beats Big Hurt on the tournament floor, too.

From the present perspective, Masochism Rules could be called a "poor man's Preying Mantis/Poisoned Water Supply", while The Big Hurt caters to even "poorer" players. While nine Top Runners' Conferences admittedly is harsh, Faked Hit as an uncommon card is not so hard to get in multiples, and three Preying Mantis is maybe just about doable these days—whereas Poisoned Water Supply is expected to be hard to come by, now that *Proteus* supplies have all but dried up.

After all of this lengthy discussion, it is almost a pity to tell players that they should not use no-run stacks in tournaments, if it can be avoided at all. Though Faked Hit is a cool card to finish off a BP stategy that requires running at least initially, a no-run stack has by definition no interaction whatsoever with its opponents, and is therefore quite boring for everybody involved.

Let's face it: In this way, players miss out on a whole lot of fun that a game of **Netrunner** should provide (yes, even in tournaments), and what is worse, do the same to others. Incidentally, the WotC design team revealed that there were more cards like Faked Hit and Poisoned Water Supply in the original *Proteus* design, but that they were dropped during playtesting. Maybe **Netrunner** would have been better off if Faked Hit and Poisoned Water Supply had also been scrapped.

That said, there is one point in support of no-run decks: They are ideal for those moments when no other player is around and you are itching for a game of solitaire **Netrunner**. Imagine an evil Corp that deserves taking down, and count the turns it takes you to daub it with Bad Publicity, maybe enlisting your grandmother or little brother to deal the brain damage. This can get really exciting, so always keep a stack handy at home (and please keep it there!).

Netrunner's Rebirth: The State of Affairs

by Zvi Mowshowitz
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It looked like everything was ready. I would get the contract in the next week and had been told this flat out. I had an offer to print the cards that I could work with. There was a ton of playtesting and other work to do, but things were in place. What I didn't realize was just how badly organized WotC really is. Don't get me wrong—they are great guys, but less than reliable. If it were another company I would actually be worried, but everyone I talk to who has worked with them tells me that the delays should come as no surprise. People I know well have told me not to lose sleep over it. Once it became clear that it would be impossible to make this year's convention season, and given the WotC plan to release three new games (and of course **Magic: The Gathering**®—*Odyssey*™) later in 2001, it made a lot of sense to wait for next year.

While the legal requirements are in a weird sort of limbo, I am repeatedly told that we have an agreement—they are simply too busy to make it legal, and until then I can't do much for obvious reasons. So I'm spending my time on set and card design. That should be the most important thing. There are big theoretical issues, and I have spent endless hours talking with friends on the Pro Tour and with members of R&D, including Mark Rosewater, Skaff Elias and Randy Buehler. Not suprisingly, they push a strategy very similar to that of **Magic**®, with a wide variety of card quality: a hand-picked subset that is worthwhile in Constructed alongside obviously bad cards for new players to recognize. I still can't find anyone who knows **Netrunner** who agrees with that approach. To a small extent, though, WotC R&D has a point. I no longer believe that every single card in a set should come out looking strong. Instead, I'm giving players an expensive way to do something they may need to do in strange situations. A current example would be a card that allows the Corp to rez its ice when it otherwise couldn't do so. I want it for thematic reasons, knowing full well that without giving it a side effect it won't get played.

Meanwhile, other questions come up about which strategies to help and which to target. One player thinks Big Dig is dangerously strong, one thinks it's worthless. More fundamental to me is what kind of Constructed decks we want. The modest proposal is to try and force players to stop playing **Magic** and instead play **Netrunner**.

Powerful Constructed decks create games that look little to nothing like Limited play. There are Runners who don't run, Corps that almost never create a permanent subsidiary data fort. Having a wide variety of decks is obviously good for the game, but the aim is to do for **Netrunner** what the *Invasion*™ block did for **Magic**: Force players to return to the core of the game, the part that made us play in the first place, and quit trying to play all this solitaire.

In the short run, my goal is to assemble a version of the new set for playtesting, so I am releasing card ideas a few at a time. More often than not there is healthy discussion afterwards, even heated arguments, pointing to "broken" first and second turns or quick setups. This hasn't yet generated enough real decklists and playtesting games, but that can come later. In summary, I have had to push back my timetable to conform with the realities of the situation, but hopefully we can get it right.

You can join Zvi's discussion group and catch the latest developments at the following URL:

`http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NetrunnerRnD`

The 2001 *Open de Paris*

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edited by Jens Kreutzer
support by Eric Platel

Vastly more important than any old tennis championship (well, at least for Netrunner players), the real *French Open (or rather, Open de Paris) took place on May 26-27, 2001. The following is a joint report of the event by Derek Evans and Gilles Delcourt, who were there for us. First, Derek's impressions:*

It all started when Eric Platel announced the French Open Championships for 2001. In his email he said that everyone was welcome, but that he could only host Derek Evans and Gilles Delcourt. Well, with a personal invitation to stay at someone's flat for the weekend before he'd even met me, it was the least I could do to take him up on the offer.

First I had to check with my wife whether I was allowed to go to Paris for the weekend, and once I'd picked myself up off the floor I had to check she wasn't joking. I quickly applied for a passport and booked the train from Trowbridge all the way to Paris. The passport was easy, organising the train journey was a nightmare. I shan't bore you with the details and the amount of stress it induced, but on the day before travel, there was a local train strike called for the exact time I wanted to get to London, and it took all day to arrange an alternative route … whereupon they promptly called off the strike—aargh!

The actual journey was uneventful and I arrived only 10 minutes late. Eric and Gilles were waiting for me and spotted my red hat and Welsh flag—no problem. Eric took us back to his place in a taxi to deposit our weekend gear, and then we headed out for a pizza.

Now just to make things clear: I have never before travelled abroad alone, and when I arrived in Paris, I was under the impression that I only spoke one word of French, *bonjour*. By the time we got to the pizza place, I realised I knew six words: *bonjour*, *oui*, *avalanche*, *non*, *merci*, and *au revoir*. The pizza was great and so was the company; the only problem was that Eric wouldn't let me pay for the meal or the taxi fare.

The next morning, Saturday, we took the Métro to the gaming hall. It was so relaxing just to follow Eric and not be the slightest bit bothered about what any of the signs said and what any of the stations were called. I didn't know, and it didn't matter.

When we arrived the place was buzzing. There were a hundred people there at least, but unfortunately for the **Magic** prerelease to be held at the same time as our tournament. Yannick and Eric put out a good display of cards and banners, however, so that people knew there was another event being held at the same time.

That day, the Sealed tournament was held, and we were given our cards in an orderly fashion and told how much time we had to build our decks, in French and again in English. Gilles made sure I understood, and I went about putting together my decks. My first match was against the only woman in the tournament, Caroline. I had already been told that she was a good player, so it was good news and bad news, really. Caroline spoke pretty good English, so deciding who played Corp first was not a problem (and it turned out to be me).

In this first game, the cards just seemed to fall for me: Filter and an agenda in my opening hand. Fetch tagged her twice as my only ice on R&D, but she suspected that I had no cards that made use of tags. Then I couldn't believe my luck when Caroline installed Broker and used it. Knowing there's no point in just using it once, I left it alone on my next turn. I think Caroline's next turn went something like run, add to Broker, draw, install Short Circuit. That was an opportunity I was not going to miss. First action: zap Short Circuit, second action: zap Broker, and that was the end of Caroline's chances as Runner. She got her own back as Corp, though.

The game started fairly normally; she scored an agenda early and I kept running R&D, which was costing me bits, meaning that I couldn't run every turn if I also wanted to improve my situation. Caroline built an SDF with two pieces of ice in front of it, and I got Short Circuit installed and started stockpiling bits. Then she finally rezzed the Code Gate that had been sitting in front of R&D the whole time. In her next turn, she installed something in the SDF, and I used all my bits to get Loony Goon, install it and run the SDF, getting through and finding it was some pointless upgrade. In Caroline's next turn, she installs another card in the fort and advances it once. She only has 3 agenda points and one advancement counter on the card, not enough bits for fast advance, so I'm happy to gain four bits, say done and run it on my next turn. Unfortunately it was Tycho Extension, and the game was over. Then Caroline told me that when the game started, she had four agenda cards in HQ, 50% of her agenda points, which is why she wasn't worried about me running R&D. Well played Caroline, and badly played me. 10-0, 0-10.

For the rest of the day I was always lucky with the cards: In my opening hand as the Runner, I have always had at least one breaker or The Short Circuit, and it seemed like Glacier would turn up only after I had scored an agenda. I can remember one game where I had a sentry breaker and a code gate breaker in play and the Corp had no walls, and another time when two of the three cards in my HQ were agendas and the Runner accessed the third. A draw was my most common match result, having three draws, one win and one loss. I was pleased by two facts: I never lost a game as the Corp, and I was the only player not to lose to the eventual winner (that was another draw).

I finished fourth on the day, which was far better than I had ever hoped for. I'd like to thank Eric for his hospitality and friendship, and such a well-organised day, along with Yannick. On Saturday night, I got to sit outside at a roadside restaurant, eat great food and drink great wine and watch the world go by—it was magical. I'd recommend a trip to a tournament in Paris to any and every **Netrunner** player. With my wife's permission, I'll be back next year. *Au revoir.*

Here is Gilles' report:

Let me introduce myself: I am the co-sysop of the Liège City Grid, in Belgium for those who don't know (er ... in Western Europe, for those that really can't figure it out). This was my second time at the French **Netrunner** Open and my fourth tournament or so in France.

I came to Paris on Friday evening (two and a half hours by train, not enough to finish a good Terry Pratchett reading), and was soon followed by Derek Evans from the UK. I have known him for some time chatting on the Net, but meeting in meatspace is something else entirely. Together with Eric Platel (our 3-star host for the weekend), we had pizza and started talking about **Netrunner**, the European Community, and lots of less funny things.

On the next day, we had a small breakfast and came to the place where it was all going to happen: a spacious game center called Ostelen. Surrounded by a frenetic **Magic: The Gathering** prerelease crowd, we ended up having 14 players for the Sealed tournament, thanks to the excellent organization by Eric Platel and Yannick Mescam (I have to mention here that those guys could have competed for the Top 5, but they dropped to just run the tournament: Hats off, guys!).

The Sealed decks were made from one starter, one *Proteus* booster and two *Classic* boosters. Most of the rare cards I got were unplayable in that format (Bio-weapons Engineering with only one source of meat damage, Elena Laskova with only two preps, etc.), but I also had some luck, getting four multi-access preps in my Runner deck. Games where quite tight, thus enjoyable. Many a time I felt that things could go drastically right or wrong depending on me or my opponent making the correct choice. I for myself remember one tragic error (blame it on the fatigue): The time when I got tagged and bagged to death without using that Wilson to avoid the tag!

Winner of the day was Jean-Yves Lamour, who I played in my last game. He took me by surprise, gaining 8 bits in one action thanks to his unexpected Organ Donor and proceeding to steal my not-so-safe agenda. This made the difference on that round, and his talent allowed him to win as Corp, too. By the end of the first day he was ranking first with 23 points out of a maximum of 30.

Derek, Eric and I (together with another French player and his charming wife) had a much-needed supper in a fine French restaurant. I have to tell you that there is more to participating in such a tournament than just competing with new talented opponents. There's also the delight of visiting places, discovering others, and enjoying a good meal. If Derek had a special interest in French wine (Eric was happy that I had brought along some famous Belgian beers), I for one fell in love with a dessert called "Île flottante et ses fruits rouges." Hmm ... I tell you, there's nothing like a **Netrunner** tournament abroad.

Well, I'll skip over some interesting discussions we had late at night and my headache on Sunday morning to get to the Revised Constructed tournament. Still featuring five games, this had a little more attendance (16) despite the second edition of that **Magic** prerelease. I had great expectations for my Runner deck (a straightforward Lucidrine/Liberated Saving Accounts strategy), which had proved quite challenging even for the fastest decks during playtesting. On the other hand, my Corp deck was only a slight improvement over the classic Golden Loop (Golden 18) deck. Sure, it was going to concede a few agenda points on every match, but it had speed on its side, and with low-value agendas, I felt safe from those infamous Gypsy™ Schedule Analyzer stacks that I was expecting in large numbers.

In fact I was proved totally wrong. Neither were my opponents playing decks of the supposed kind, nor were my decks strong against them. In my first match, I played against Derek. He got me stymied when I accessed several Doppelganger Antibody. Without any bits at the start of the run and no way to get them back quickly, I couldn't stop him. This proves once again that a competitive deck is often a deck of the unexpected kind.

The next match was my revenge against Jean-Yves. He was expecting a lot from his Dieter Esslin/Fetal AI combo, but tore out a few of his remaining hairs when I trashed the whole ensemble with Death From Above (which I had included at the last possible moment when I remembered a similar deck played by Rik Geysels).

As the Runner, he was unlucky, and I had my first (and only) total victory of the day. Indeed the other matches didn't go too well for me, mostly because of my opponents' skill and their unusual deck designs (for my area). Here I have to mention Fréderic "Crazy" Garnier's once again playing a more than unusual deck. Imagine facing a 120-cards Corp deck! And the little "tower of horrors" had only six agendas in it (all of them being Political Overthrow, of course). More than one Runner got killed after being a little bit too curious while digging the pile.

His decks, and his talent of playing in an ever-surprising but efficient way, lead him to 5th place for the day, but Number One was Rémy Berenger with his Rent-to-Own deck, as classic as it could be, and an efficient Runner deck based on small money preps and Elena Laskova (in fact, most of the cards for this deck came from the *Classic* expansion).

After a computer crash, we got the combined rankings: Rémy took over a well-deserved first place, Fréderic "Doomed" Garnier went second as usual, and I ended up being 7th, better than expected after a pitiful day in Constructed. I must give a special mention to Derek, who scored as well as I did, although he had to drop out of the last two matches (something about a train to catch to get back home—what a lame excuse).

Everybody got rewarded with nice prizes, including boardgames, DVDs, comics, T-shirts and more! This was definitely a brilliant organization by Eric and Yannick, and I can't wait to visit again for the French championship in November this year. Hope to meet you there too!

Did You Know?

Bits and Pieces from the NR Trivia Collection

#10: Top Runners' Conference

by Jens Kreutzer
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Top Runners' Conference represents one of the most powerful bit-gaining schemes in **Netrunner**. For an investment of 0 bits and an action, the Runner gains 2 bits each turn for the rest of the game—as long as no run is made, that is. Obviously, this is not a good idea in a stack that does a lot of running early on, but if this resource survives just two Corp turns, it is already on par with Score! Another elegant trick is to combine it with Smith's Pawnshop: If the Runner only runs every second turn and installs a Conference right after running, it is possible to gain 6 bits per action out of it.

In the long term, Top Runners' Conference in multiples beats even Loan from Chiba for a huge bit buildup that is then used up in one fell winning swoop (like The Big Dig or Masochism Rules), often helped along by a misc.for-sale for even more bits.

Top Runners' Conference ranks among the most sought-after cards in the game, not only because it is such a powerful and useful rare, but also because players don't want three (like Political Overthrow) or six (like World Domination), but as many as they can get—for this prestige card only shows its true potential if you have a *lot* of copies in your stack.

The card Top Runners' Conference also lent its name to The Top Runners' Conference (TRC), the official **Netrunner** Players' Organization, and a stylized version of the cool artwork by James Allen Higgins has been turned into the logo of this newsletter: A sphere connected with and surrounded by a circle of eight other spheres (though on the card, there are actually ten shapes in the circle).

The picture apparently shows a conference in Netspace, where ten Runners have gathered around a central spherical object that is either another Runner or perhaps some matter of importance being discussed. The Runners are not depicted as in real life, but as the icons they use when they roam the Net—the virtual form in which they appear to everybody else they encounter there.

Among various geometrical and abstract shapes, a rattlesnake and a sphere with the letter M (for Militech?) stand out. One icon in the background is a sphere that seems to have several balls floating around it—maybe an atom or a solar system, or perhaps a Beholder, a monster that is featured in the **D&D**® roleplaying game (the sphere seems to have a single eye and a gaping, grinning mouth, which would fit).

As enjoyable as the card's ability and artwork is its flavor text, which reads: "I have discovered a truly elegant codebreaking routine. Unfortunately, this chip is not large enough to contain it." Jennifer Clarke Wilkes has revealed that she was the author of this text, and that its reference to a certain, very famous mathematical problem was intentional. Apparently, Richard Garfield, who holds a Ph.D. in mathematics, was impressed and amused by this.

The problem referred to is known as Fermat's Last Theorem. Pierre de Fermat (1601–1665) was a French mathematician who wrote an annotation into the margin of his copy (now lost) of Bachet's translation of Diophantus' *Arithmetika*. Translated into modern English and modern terminology from the Latin, his comment amounts to:

"$a^n + b^n = c^n$ has no positive integer solutions for a, b and c when $n > 2$. I have discovered a truly remarkable proof which this margin is too small to contain."

(In the original: "Cubum autem in duos cubos, aut quadratoquadratum in duos quadratoquadratos, et generaliter nullam in infinitum ultra quadratum potestatem in duos ejusdem nominis fas est dividere: cujus rei demonstrationem mirabilem sane detexi. Hanc marginis exiguitas non caperet.")

The following is an excerpt from the Microsoft Encarta (`http://encarta.msn.com`), "Fermat's Last Theorem," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2001:

"While studying the work of the ancient Greek mathematician Diophantus, Fermat became interested in the chapter on Pythagorean numbers—that is, the sets of three numbers, a, b, and c, such as 3, 4, and 5, for which the equation

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

is true. He wrote in pencil in the margin, 'I have discovered a truly remarkable proof which this margin is too small to contain.' Fermat added that when the Pythagorean theorem is altered to read

$$a^n + b^n = c^n,$$

the new equation cannot be solved in integers for any value of n greater than 2. That is, no set of positive integers a, b, and c can be found to satisfy, for example, the equation

$$a^3 + b^3 = c^3$$

or

$$a^4 + b^4 = c^4.$$

Fermat's simple theorem turned out to be surprisingly difficult to prove. For more than 350 years, many mathematicians tried to prove Fermat's statement or to disprove it by finding an exception."

Quoted from *A Short Account of the History of Mathematics* (4th edition, 1908) by W. W. Rouse Ball:

"Except a few isolated papers, Fermat published nothing in his lifetime, and gave no systematic exposition of his methods. Some of the most striking of his results were found after his death on loose sheets of paper or written in the margins of works which he had read and annotated, and are unaccompanied by any proof. It is thus somewhat difficult to estimate the dates and originality of his work. He was constitutionally modest and retiring, and does not seem to have intended his papers to be published. "

Quoted from an article by J. J. O'Connor and E. F. Robertson:
`(http://www-groups.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/~history /HistTopics/Fermat's_last_theorem.htm)`

"Despite large prizes being offered for a solution, Fermat's Last Theorem remained unsolved [for a long time]. It has the dubious distinction of being the theorem with the largest number of published false proofs. For example, over

1,000 false proofs were published between 1908 and 1912. The only positive progress seemed to be computing results which merely showed that any counter-example would be very large. Using techniques based on Kummer's work, Fermat's Last Theorem was proved true, with the help of computers, for n up to 4,000,000 by 1993. [...]

"The final chapter in the story began in 1955, although at this stage the work was not thought of as connected with Fermat's Last Theorem. Yutaka Taniyama asked some questions about elliptic curves, i. e. curves of the form $y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$ for constants a and b.

Further work by Weil and Shimura produced a conjecture, now known as the Shimura-Taniyama-Weil Conjecture. In 1986, the connection was made between the Shimura-Taniyama-Weil Conjecture and Fermat's Last Theorem by Frey at Saarbrücken, showing that Fermat's Last Theorem was far from being some unimportant curiosity in number theory but was in fact related to fundamental properties of space.

"Further work by other mathematicians showed that a counter-example to Fermat's Last Theorem would provide a counter-example to the Shimura-Taniyama-Weil Conjecture. The proof of Fermat's Last Theorem was completed in 1993 by Andrew Wiles, a British mathematician working at Princeton in the USA.

Wiles gave a series of three lectures at the Isaac Newton Institute in Cambridge, England, the first on Monday 21 June, the second on Tuesday 22 June. In the final lecture on Wednesday 23 June 1993 at around 10.30 in the morning, Wiles announced his proof of Fermat's Last Theorem as a corollary to his main results. Having written the theorem on the blackboard, he said, 'I will stop here', and sat down. In fact, Wiles had proved the Shimura-Taniyama-Weil Conjecture for a class of examples, including those necessary to prove Fermat's Last Theorem.

"This, however, is not the end of the story. On 4 December 1993, Andrew Wiles made a statement in view of the speculation. He said that during the reviewing process a number of problems had emerged, most of which had been resolved. However, one problem remained, and Wiles essentially withdrew his claim to have a proof. [...]

"In March 1994, Faltings, writing in *Scientific American*, said: 'If it were easy, he would have solved it by now. Strictly speaking, it was not a proof when it was announced.' Weil, also in *Scientific American*, wrote: 'I believe he has had some good ideas in trying to construct the proof, but the proof is not there. To some extent, proving Fermat's Theorem is like climbing Everest. If a man wants to climb Everest and falls short of it by 100 yards, he has not climbed Everest.'

"In fact, from the beginning of 1994, Wiles began to collaborate with Richard Taylor in an attempt to fill the holes in the proof. However, they decided that one of the key steps in the proof, using methods due to Flach, could not be made to work. They tried a new approach with a similar lack of success. In August 1994, Wiles addressed the International Congress of Mathematicians but was no nearer to solving the difficulties.

Taylor suggested a last attempt to extend Flach's method in the way necessary and Wiles, although convinced it would not work, agreed mainly to enable him to convince Taylor that it could never work. Wiles worked on it for about two weeks, then suddenly inspiration struck: 'In a flash I saw that the thing that stopped it [the extension of Flach's method] working was something that would make another method I had tried previously work.' On 6 October, Wiles sent the new proof to three colleagues including Faltings. All liked the new proof which was essentially simpler than the earlier one."

So, using modern mathematical methods and more than a hundred pages in the process, Fermat's Theorem has finally been proved to be correct (though people without an academic mathematical background probably would have a hard time understanding this proof). However, Fermat couldn't have known all of these modern methods back in around 1630, and it remains a mystery how he could know (or why he thought he knew) that his theorem was true.

(By the way, *Classic*'s agenda Theorem Proof is almost certainly a jab at the voluminous book that had to be written in order to prove Fermat's Last Theorem.)

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